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## **REB convenes English language strategy meeting**

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The Rwanda Education Board (REB) convened key development partners as well as senior mentor and sector education officer representatives for an English language strategic review yesterday. The meeting, which took place in Aberdeen House in Gaculiro, Kigali, aimed to review the status of English language in Rwanda and to identify current challenges as well as opportunities and potential solutions.

After the transition to English as the language of instruction in schools in 2009, the Rwandan government as well as development partners launched several initiatives to further equip teachers with English language skills as quickly and efficiently as possible. Most recently, REB joined partners, including DFID, the Wellspring Foundation, and the USAID-funded Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative, in rolling out the national School-based Mentoring Program. One thousand mentors will support teachers with English language and pedagogy across the country.

"The School-based Mentoring Program remains a crucial component of quality education," said Dr. John Rutayisire, REB Director General, at the event. "While it remains so, there is need to look for alternative and complementary approaches."

The large majority of primary and secondary school teachers are at the beginner and elementary levels of English. Benchmarks will be set for teacher progress.

DFID hired consultant Jean Wilson to write an English language strategy paper for the Ministry of Education. "There is a need for one structured, national program," she said. "The efforts of all stakeholders must be coordinated."

According to Jean Wilson, this coordinated effort will require extensive training for English trainers and teachers, a set of structured materials for national use, teacher training in autonomous language learning, group support, and exposure to English language not only in schools, but also in homes and communities.

"This will require a tremendous effort," she said. "But if Rwanda can't do it, no country in Africa can."

The Education Development Center (EDC), British Council, DFID, UNICEF, the International Education Exchange (IEE), Peace Corps, VSO, the Wellspring Foundation, and FHI 360 participated in the event. In his closing remarks, Dr. Rutayisire stated that this process was "history in the making."